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## N. Y. PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY FIRST CONCERT—25th SEASON.

The New York Philharmonic Society has had a splendid education. For 25 years it has practiced under able directors, every year adding to its efficiency, and rarely falling below a high standard, as an equality of excellence has been preserved by culling out the weak members and replacing them by more efficient men. This Society has one advantage that no private society can ever have. Being a professional society, in which each member shares pro rata of the profits, it can afford to have private rehearsals, in addition to the public rehearsals, which are sources of profit, so, while such a course would ruin a private enterprise from the enormous cost it would entail, the Philharmonic profits at the same time that it increases its efficiency. To this fact must be attributed the brilliant position which it occupies to-day. It is not only immeasurably the finest orchestra on this Continent, but it has, for its size, scarcely a superior in Europe. We may feel proud of this Society, for it represents nobly the musical progress of our country, and every thoughtful citizen should consider it a duty to give it a cordial and liberal support.

The programme of the first concert was as follows:

Symphony No. 2 in C, Op. 61—R. Schumann. Scena ed aria, "Infelice"—Mendelsshon. Fraulein Natalie Seelig. Concerto No. 5, for piano, in E flat—Beethoven. Mr. Carl Wolfsohn. Nächtlicher Zug. Episode from Lenau's Faust (first time)—Liszt. Aria, Parto, parto, ma tu ben mio—Mozart. Fraulein Natalie Seelig. Claronette obligato, Mr. E. Boehm. Overture, Columbus, in D (first time), G. F. Bristow.

The symphony in C is one of Schumann's finest inspirations. It is clear in design, from the beginning to the end. In it science is not

paramount, but the melodious element, dignified by broad yet elaborate treatment, dominates and characterizes the whole. The first movement which is preceded by a thoughtful *Lento*, is vigorous and spirited, and is instrumented with wonderful power. It was brilliantly executed. The points of excellence were, coloring most exquisitely shaded, positive subordination of one class of instruments where another class should be prominent, and the short, sharp crispness of the chords, together with a general delicacy of execution both in the strings and the wind. The second movement, Scherzo and Trio, is a bold, imperative movement, full of character, and exceedingly beautiful. Its execution was without a blemish. The frequent changes of tempo which occur in this movement were given with remarkable smoothness, and produced charming effects. The promptness and delicacy of the wind instruments were specially admirable the crescendos were singularly fine, the emphasis both strong and delicate, and the general solid unity of the execution worthy of all praise. The Larghetto is a composition full of intellectual and passionate beauty—a masterly combination of melody, imagination and science. This was played with wonderful tenderness and subdued sentiment, and was so delicately colored that it presented a picture of almost ineffable beauty. The wind instruments were superb; their answering passages did not come in like black spots upon a white surface, but were breathed and blended to an exquisite harmonious effect. We would suggest here to Mr. Carl Bergmann, that closer attention should be paid to the simultaneous bowing of the stringed instruments. It is due as well to the enjoyment of the eye as to the ear. It is painful to the eye to see bows up and down and mid-way, while executing the same passage, and in passages of emphatic delicacy or portamento, the cultivated ear can easily detect the want of unity in the bowing. The other players should regulate their bowing by that of the leaders, as rowers take their time from the stroke oar. A point so important should be insisted on rigidly.

The Allegro Molto vivace, is a bold and brilliant movement, the subject full of character, and the whole treatment remarkable for the breadth and freedom of its passages for the stringed instruments, and the masterly management of the wind instruments. In brilliant and effective power, this movement could hardly be exceeded. Mr. Bergmann took it at a splendid tempo and kept his players up to their work with an easy control, which proved how fully he trusted them and how thoroughly they relied upon him. The performance of the whole symphony was a success, complete and unequivocal.

Fraulein Natalie Seelig has great dramatic force—a force altogether too demonstrative for the concert-room. She has a voice of large tone, which in some portions is of excellent

quality, but its schooling has been very bad indeed. Her somber voice has been carried up too high, so that in the utterance of the upper voice the quality is lost in a strained harshness which is painful to hear, both from the lack of quality and the over-quantity, and the frequent failure to reach the just and perfect pitch. Another result from this bad schooling is, that never using the clear voice, her singing is utterly without color, no fine shading is possible, and expression with her is simply singing louder. Again, never using the clear voice, her attempts at execution in the somber voice are labored, hard and inarticulate. The lady has evidently musical instinct and strong impulse, but they are inoperative against faults of education which have become permanent habits. After what we have said, it will be needless to remark upon her execution of the two noble scenes which were set down for her in the programme.

Beethoven's Concerto in E flat, is a great work, but it is more a concerto with the piano than for the piano, as the orchestra absorbs the grandest thoughts. So large are these thoughts, indeed, that a master mind at the piano alone can command attention to its portion of the work. This is more especially the case in the adagio, which requires high and broad intelligence and tenderness of touch to interpret its dignity, sentiment and breadth. Mr. Wolfsohn's interpretation of this movement was weak, lacking soul and character. It was smoothly and gracefully executed, but the earnestness and intensity of the conception met with no response from the performer. In the quick movements, Mr. Wolfsohn shone to greater advantage. He manipulates very brilliantly, although in the bravura scale passages there was rarely perfect unity, and not always sufficient clearness, but still his general execution was intelligible and acceptable, and his promptness in tempo, proved that he was well up to his work. Not to satisfy critical judgment, thoroughly, in the performance of such a work, is nothing derogatory to an artist, for there are few living pianists possessed of the necessary requirements. Mr. Wolfsohn is an excellent musician, and an earnest and ambitious student, and we render him admiration and sympathy for his intelligent labors in a field of study so difficult as that of Beethoven's piano works.

Liszt's "Nächtlicher Zug" is a weary, dreary, senseless stringing together of patches of irreconcilable discords, which mean nothing, being but a pedantic display of his knowledge of harmony and instrumental combinations and effects, without one idea or salient thought. Considered as music, it is disgusting; it has isolated instrumental effects which would be beautiful if they had relevance to anything, but we can only view them as experimental combinations, and devoid of any other meaning. It is a waste of time to produce these grim, fantastic absurdities, for they occupy the

places which would otherwise be filled by sound, intelligible music. Mr. Bergmann did his best with it; it was splendidly executed, and we believe that his interpretation gave as clear an idea of the conglomeration, for we cannot esteem it a composition, as could be presented by any director.

George F. Bristow's fine descriptive overture, "Columbus," was a great relief from the choleric symptoms left by the "Zug." It is a work that would do credit to any programme. It is clear and definite in design, pure and artistic in form; the subjects are well chosen and well worked; the picture is painted in natural transitions, and the thoughts are fresh, positive, and have marked character. In compactness and fitness, and harmonious consecutive ness of idea, it gives evidence of a master mind, with imagination to invent, with resources to express, and with judgment to keep to the level and the limits of the inspiration and the chosen form. The instrumentation of the work is also masterly. Its treatment in the orchestra proves Mr. Bristow to be a thoroughly practical scorer. He uses all the instruments with a brilliant freedom, with a power of contrast and a delicate coloring which proves that he is perfectly familiar with the character and resources of the material of an orchestra. This work stamps Mr. Bristow with eminence as a composer, and the burst of applause and its continuance at the close of the overture proved that the highly critical Philharmonic audience appreciated and recognized its high merits. It was magnificently performed; every man in the orchestra seemed to feel called upon to do his best, and aided Mr. Bergmann in his successful endeavors to do justice to the work. Had it not been placed the last piece on the programme, its repetition would have been enforced. Would it not be well to reproduce one of Mr. Bristow's symphonies? It would be a well-earned compliment to one of the most efficient members of the Society, and the works themselves are fully deserving of the honor.

We cannot but compliment Mr. Bergmann most cordially upon the brilliant success of this concert. Not only were the instrumental works given with a perfection never before reached in this country, but the accompaniments were irreproachable in their promptness and delicacy. He may well be proud of the material of his orchestra, and they, in turn, cannot but esteem it a privilege to play under so brilliant, accomplished and so conscientious a leader.

#### COMPLIMENTARY CONCERT TO MR. GEORGE W. WARREN.

A large number of the most prominent citizens of Brooklyn tendered a complimentary concert to Mr. G. W. Warren, organist, composer and teacher of that city, a gentleman

universally respected and esteemed, which was given on Tuesday evening, 17th inst., at Plymouth Church. The elite of Brooklyn attended, and among the crowded audience many prominent amateurs and professionals from New York were observed. So brilliant a testimonial must have proved both pleasant and flattering to Mr. Warren.

The artists and amateurs assisting Mr. Warren, were Mrs. Comstock, Mrs. Stetson, Signor Centemeri, Mr. Comstock, Mr. Noe, Mr. Theodore Thomas, Mr. Mueller, and the Holy Trinity Choir of boys, and chorus. The programme was very varied, exhibiting in its arrangement Mr. Warren's usual tact and taste, and the assisting artists did their utmost to render it an effective and spirited manner.

The double anthem, "Te Deum Laudamus," by G. W. Warren, is a clever and telling composition, and was given in most effective style by Mrs. Comstock, Mrs. Stetson, Mr. Comstock, Mr. Noe and chorus. The Salve Regina, for soprano, contralto, and oboe, was charming in its effects, and was well rendered, as was also the ave maria of Bach.

The ancient Christmas carol, "Good King Wenceslaus," is delightful for its quaint character and rhythm, and was one of the most telling points of the programme.

Mr. Theo. Thomas played Ernst's "Elegie," with more than his usual breadth of expression, and deserved the warm approbation he met with.

Mr. G. W. Warren had literally everything to do, and it is but justice to say that he did everything well. Mr. Warren is fond of combinations, and, so far as we can judge by his concert last year and the one under notice, he selects the most effective combinations for voices and instruments within his reach, and the results justify his choice. They lighten up the programme and they are altogether unobjectionable. Mr. Warren's compositions are melodious, well harmonized and voiced, and generally musically, and his accompaniments are tasteful, and display a good care for the supremacy of the singer. His organ solos were spirited displays of manual dexterity, combined with good taste and mastery of the resources of that noble instrument. Hook's great organ was certainly a notable star on that occasion, and in the display of its specialties was never better handled. In certain points its beauty and purity are unsurpassed. We think that Mr. Warren could safely try one more concert in the Spring.

#### GRAND ORGAN EXHIBITION AT THE CHURCH OF THE COVENANT.

Notwithstanding the terribly inclement night of Thursday, the 15th inst., a very large audience was gathered together at the above church, allured by the attractions of the new organ just completed by Mr. Levi U. Stuart of

this city, and the expected performance of two of our finest organists—Mr. George F. Bristow and Mr. George W. Morgan. The Covenant Church is situated on Park-av. (which is fast becoming magnificent with costly sacred edifices), and is remarkable for beauty of design and finish—equaling any specimen of its class in the city. The organ just completed for its use is comparatively small in scheme, but is large and truly grand in many essential features, and particularly in orchestral effects. Mr. L. U. Stuart, the builder, is justly favorably known by the enlarged organ in the Tabernacle Church in Sixth-ave. The front of this organ is unique, yet tasteful and extremely pleasing to the eye; but the decorative part of it has frequently embarrassed with its debris the effective working of this really noble instrument, particles getting into its mechanism, and so either clogging the pipes, or rendering the mechanism partially unmanageable. An accident of this kind occurred on Thursday evening, in the midst of Flotow's overture, choking the palette of the swell and compelling Mr. Bristow to stop in his performance until it was remedied. This fact will account for certain apparent blemishes in the utterance and mechanism by fixing the true cause. We may further remark that, placed as the organ is, it is subject to constant and radical changes of temperature, frequently throwing the reeds out of tune—a temporary blemish utterly beyond the control of the builder.

The compass of this organ is from C C to G, and on pedals from C C C to G. It has 14 stops on the great organ, 9 stops in the swell, and 6 in the pedal organ. Its solid, compact tone, and true musical strength when the full organ is used, amazes all who merely consider its nominal capacity, for it surpasses in power, as heard in that large church, any organ in this city, except that in Trinity Church. The great organ is truly magnificent, and the diapasons throughout are what their name imports, and make the instrument the noble accessory to religious service, which it should be to fulfill its purpose. We remarked upon this fine specimen of Mr. Stuart's ability in organ building, that his idea of voicing is sanctioned by the experience of many years, and if strong, telling style of voicing be followed, time's mellowing influence will blend and soften them into sweetly melodious utterance. At present some mixtures appear shrill or even hard, without a grand diapason being used to subdue and conform them into a harmonious and majestic ensemble. Taken as a whole, and freely accepting for individual stops, like the cornet, Mr. Stuart's policy in shaping their utterance, we can find no blemish to displease even fastidious ears, and its general effect must be conceded by all intelligent observers to be remarkably fine, complete and grand indeed.

The selections made by the two distinguished